



# COTSWOLD

District Council

Council name	<b>COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>
Name and date of Committee	<b>OVERVIEW &amp; SCRUTINY – 6 MAY 2025</b>
Subject	<b>UPDATE ON HOUSING ALLOCATIONS AND HOMELESSNESS</b>
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Juliet Layton Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning Email: <a href="mailto:Juliet.layton@cotswold.gov.uk">Juliet.layton@cotswold.gov.uk</a>
Accountable officer	Jon Dearing – Interim Assistant Director Email: <a href="mailto:Democratic@Cotswold.gov.uk">Democratic@Cotswold.gov.uk</a>
Report author	Caroline Clissold – Business Manager Housing Email: <a href="mailto:Democratic@Cotswold.gov.uk">Democratic@Cotswold.gov.uk</a>
Summary/Purpose	To update the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on emerging homelessness pressures, and the plan to address these through the Preventing Homelessness Strategy and the Action Plan to Prevent Homelessness
Annexes	Annex A – Overview of current homelessness in the district Annex B – Draft Preventing Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan
Recommendation(s)	That Overview and Scrutiny resolves to : <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Note the update on emerging homelessness pressures</li><li>2. Agree on any recommendation it wishes to submit to Cabinet regarding the draft Preventing Homelessness Strategy</li><li>3. Agree on any recommendation it wishes to submit to Cabinet regarding the draft Preventing Homelessness Action Plan</li></ol>
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Delivering Good Services</li><li>• Delivering Housing</li><li>• Supporting Communities</li><li>• Supporting the Economy</li></ul>
Key Decision	NO



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Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Leader of the Council, Chief Executive, Director of Place, Chief Finance Officer, Interim Head of Legal Services, Interim Executive Director, Interim Managing Director (Publica), Internal and External Stakeholders



## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1** The Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) 2017 introduced statutory duties that Local Authorities must adhere to in order to respond to and prevent homelessness. HRA included new duties such as the requirement to prevent homelessness.
- 1.2** The Housing Team is the statutory service responsible for ensuring that the council meets the statutory requirements as laid down by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (alongside other legislative requirements)
- 1.3** Cotswold District Council has had many successes since the Homelessness Reduction Act was introduced. Investment in resources and services has meant that there has been a significant reduction of rough sleeping with the council reporting low to zero numbers at any one time.
- 1.4** However, for many and often complex reasons, homelessness is rising across the country. This is also reflected within the district, with average numbers of households in some form of temporary accommodation having risen by a third during 2024-2025.
- 1.5** For 2025 onwards therefore there must be a strong focus on preventing homelessness at the earliest possible stage to achieve the aim of reducing temporary accommodation usage.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** Within the legal duties, Housing must provide a full and accessible Housing Options service, which includes, but is not limited to preventing homelessness and relieving homelessness should it occur. The Housing Team must also provide provision of safe and appropriate emergency accommodation for vulnerable residents where no other accommodation is available.
- 2.2** The Housing Team are also responsible for maintaining a fair and transparent Choice Based Lettings system (HomeseekerPlus) and supporting households in B&B emergency accommodation as well as in Council owned Hostels.
- 2.3** The Housing Team has seen many changing demands over the last 7 years including the introduction of new legislation, the Covid Pandemic and the issues facing our residents from rising cost of living implications. The service has also seen new



burdens from the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Act and various strands of housing related refugee work.

- 2.4** As a result, the Council has seen increasing numbers of people seeking assistance with Housing related issues which are in turn impacting on their accommodation meaning that they are either homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- 2.5** Preventing homelessness is always the best approach for both the customer and the local authority. The Housing Team, on average, prevent over 200 households a year from becoming homeless. By finding people alternative long-term accommodation or negotiating with family or landlords to keep people in their homes, the use of expensive B&B accommodation is lessened.
- 2.6** The Housing Team also take a robust approach to rough sleeping, working with our Outreach service to identify and contact rough sleepers at the very first sighting. This approach means that Cotswold has no entrenched rough sleepers and regularly report low to zero numbers of 'new to the street' rough sleeping.
- 2.7** Since mid-2024 however, numbers of households presenting as homeless to the Council have risen exponentially as the cost-of-living crisis deepens. Lack of move on accommodation for singles in either temporary accommodation or supported adult homelessness accommodation within the countywide pathways, combined with additional new pressures from other cohorts is also impacting on the Housing service.
- 2.8** To effectively manage and ensure that services are available for residents facing homelessness, the Council must have a robust Preventing Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan.

### **3. PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2025-2030**

- 3.1** Section 2(1) of the Homelessness Act 2002 requires local authorities to undertake regular reviews of homelessness within their area. Section 1(4) requires local authorities to publish a new homelessness strategy based on the results of this review.
- 3.2** The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced significant changes to how local authorities must statutorily assess and support households who are both at risk of



homelessness (the Prevention Duty) and to those that become homeless (the Relief Duty).

- 3.3** To support local authorities with these duties, each council receives an annual ringfenced Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) which sets out three key outcomes:
- Embed the Homelessness Reduction Act by increasing activity to prevent single homelessness and rough sleeping
  - Reduce the number of families in unsuitable temporary accommodation by maximising family homelessness prevention.
  - Reduce the use of B&B accommodation for families and eliminate family B&B placements beyond the statutory six-week limit.
- 3.4** Any Preventing Homelessness strategy must therefore be mindful of both the legislation and the ringfenced conditions of the HPG.
- 3.5** A review of the increasing demands on the Housing service and client groups most at risk of homelessness has been undertaken alongside an assessment of available emergency accommodation, countywide services, Supported Accommodation pathways, and longer-term housing options. The conclusion of this review has formed the basis for the Aims and Priorities included in the new Preventing Homelessness Strategy.
- 3.6** The strategy sets out 4 Key Aims and Priorities:
- |            |                                                                            |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Priority 1 | <b>Preventing Homelessness</b>                                             |
| Priority 2 | <b>Establishing effective partnerships and working arrangements.</b>       |
| Priority 3 | <b>Supporting rough sleepers to address their housing and other needs.</b> |
| Priority 4 | <b>Increasing Accommodation Options</b>                                    |
- 3.7** The Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2025-2030 (Annex A) will work alongside other strategies to increase accommodation options such as the Local Plan and the Long-Term Empty Homes Strategy 2024-2029.
- 3.8** A full Action Plan (Annex B) has also been developed to chart progress of the short-term and long-term aims of the Strategy.



#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1** The adoption of the Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2025-2030 provides a clear framework for the management of services to respond to residents needing support with Housing issues.
- 4.2** Once adopted, the Preventing Homelessness Action Plan will be regularly reviewed and progress of each aim charted for future service design to meet and adapt to changing needs.

#### **5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 5.1** The Council could decide not to adopt the Strategy.

#### **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1** An annual Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) is awarded to each local authority to assist in preventing homelessness. Cotswold District Council are due to receive £369,227 in 2025/26
- 6.2** The Aims of the Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2025-2030 fully complies with the conditions set out in the HPG award.

#### **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1** Section 2(1) of the Homelessness Act 2002 requires local authorities to undertake regular reviews of homelessness within its area.
- 7.2** Section 1(4) requires local authorities to publish a new homelessness strategy based on the results of this review.

#### **8. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 8.1** This strategy seeks to define how the Council will meet its statutory duties to Prevent and Relieve homelessness, ensure that rough sleeping is kept to a minimum, but preferably to zero. Expanding accommodation options to meet rising demand is also a key focus for the Council
- 8.2** Failure to prevent homelessness occurring will result in further rises in the use of expensive and inappropriate B&B, which is both detrimental to the client and has severe financial implications for the Council.



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**8.3** A strong, person-centred prevention approach is therefore essential, for both the best interests of residents and the Council.

**9. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

**9.1** An equalities impact assessment has been completed that show no negative impact on those who shared a protected characteristic and those who do not.

**10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS**

**10.1** None

**11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**11.1** None

(END)